

Session Works!

Opening Session Report
from Reps. Ida Ballasiotes and Mike Wensman — 41st District

Join us and Sen. Jim Horn for a town hall meeting!

We invite you to join us at one of three locations for a town hall meeting. Tell us your ideas, thoughts and concerns about state government and how we can make it more responsive. Bring your questions as we hold an open discussion about current issues in the Legislature and state government.

DATE: Saturday, Jan. 31, 1998

LOCATIONS AND TIMES:

Newcastle

Newcastle City Hall
City Council Chambers
13020 SE 72nd Place

9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Bellevue

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Chambers
1511 Main St.

1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Mercer Island

Mercer Island City Hall
City Council Chambers
9611 SE 36th St.

3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

HAVE A QUESTION? CALL US!

If you have questions or comments on these or other issues, please contact our office. We are here to serve you.

Rep. Ida Ballasiotes

(360) 786-7926
ballasio_id@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Mike Wensman

(360) 786-7894
wensman_mi@leg.wa.gov

Watch the local newspapers
for more town hall meetings
to be scheduled
later in the session.

SESSION WORKS!

– Opening Session Report

Rep. Ida Ballasiotes
Rep. Mike Wensman

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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Closing the loopholes on crime

**by Rep. Ida Ballasiotes,
House Criminal Justice and Corrections Chair**

As lawmakers, one of our greatest priorities is ensuring public safety. We are especially concerned when those in government responsible for upholding public safety turn a blind eye to loopholes that put citizens in jeopardy.

Here are some examples: A 17-year-old boy in the custody of a Lynnwood group home walked away from his workplace and murdered a 12-year-old babysitter in Stanwood. Two boys taken to a Seahawks' game by their group home supervisors walked away and are suspected of murdering an elderly Spokane woman. A mentally ill man with a history of violence is repeatedly released to the streets with little supervision and is now charged with the random and fatal stabbing of a retired firefighter. A parole officer who was overseeing this man before the stabbing is only now scrutinized after it's learned that two other criminals that she was supposed to be supervising separately went out and killed two women.

One of my highest priorities will be to close the loopholes that allowed these actions to occur. An audit will be underway to determine what should be done to improve supervision in group homes and make them more accountable. I will be investigating legislation to close the loopholes which currently allow violent mentally ill people to be released to the streets. And we will work to hold the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Corrections, Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration and other agencies accountable for their actions (or in-actions) in an effort to prevent these needless tragedies from occurring again. Although the session is short, only 60 days, we intend to meet these and other responsibilities, including stricter laws to remove drunk drivers from our highways.



Budgeting now and for the future

**by Rep. Mike Wensman,
House Appropriations Vice Chairman**

Thanks to a good economy and actions by the Legislature to limit spending and provide taxpayer relief, the state now has an \$861 million revenue surplus. Since \$550 million (carryover from prior years) is one-time-only money, there is general agreement to hold at least \$500 million of the surplus in reserve for any future downturn in the economy.

The booming economy is threatened, however, by transportation woes contained in the Puget Sound region. I will be doing all I can to help other legislators realize the critical traffic situation in the 41st District. I have been working in the audit review of the Department of Transportation to respond to the concerns of many legislators who feel that the department wastes tax dollars. Although most now agree that current funding is inadequate, this has been a necessary process for getting support for additional funding, and to make sure the public gets the most for its tax dollars. I hope we are able to reach a consensus on the approach to this problem.

One likely scenario would be to take money from the motor vehicle excise tax which now goes to the general fund and spend it on transportation. Although the approach is simple in theory, it raises complications due to Initiative 601 spending limitations. If we cannot resolve this conflict, we may ask you to vote in November to allow this one-time waiver to I-601.

I am working for a more stabilized school construction funding source to offset shortages in recent years and provide more local flexibility in the use of those dollars. One proposal would allow schools to receive a portion of the real estate excise taxes generated in their districts for capital projects. We will continue to study the use of levy dollars by school districts.

I am continuing my work as chairman of the Subcommittee on Local Government Finances. We have spent several months studying regional government issues, including financing and the impact of city annexations on local services. I have proposed legislation that will provide a closer study of fiscal impacts on local governments when the Legislature imposes new requirements.



SURVEY RESULTS- Sen. Jim Horn has agreed to share the results of his recent survey with us. We appreciate your responses. If you still have a survey and have not yet completed it, be sure to do so soon and mail it in.